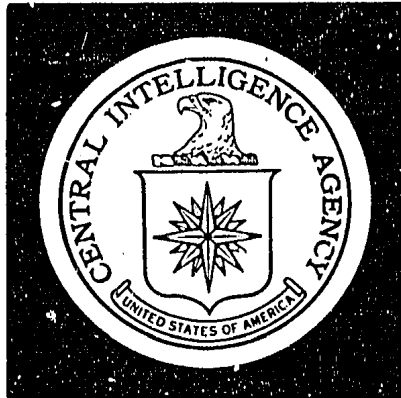


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

The Theory and Practice of Soviet Leadership Changes

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87

11 June 1970
No. 0514/70

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
11 June 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Theory and Practice of Soviet
Leadership Changes

Summary

Popular elections for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are scheduled to be held on 14 June, and a congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) is due this fall, although a definite date has not yet been announced. In theory, these two assemblies determine the state and party leadership of the Soviet Union. In practice the party leadership makes the decisions.

The Supreme Soviet election results are not expected to produce any surprises. In the post-Stalin years, they have never by themselves foreshadowed changes in top posts. Even leaders due to lose places in the Council of Ministers or the Politburo are customarily elected to the Supreme Soviet. The newly installed Supreme Soviet, which will probably meet in the last half of July or early August, will choose a chairman for its Presidium (now Nikolay Podgorny), a chairman of the Council of Ministers (now Aleksey Kosygin), and assorted lesser government officials.

There has been relatively little turnover in these top government posts in the last 15 years, and past practice does not yield many clues to future

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developments. There are continuing reports that forthcoming changes among "senior government officials" will be announced "after the elections." Changes in the top state posts usually have preceded by several months the announcements of corollary changes in the top party posts. The next Supreme Soviet session will indeed present an occasion for government appointments with full observance of the statutory requirements. On the other hand, the Soviet leadership might prefer not to announce such changes until adjustments have been made in the top party posts, by way of emphasizing the "leading role of the party."

The 24th CPSU Congress next fall will elect a new Central Committee, which in turn will immediately elect a "new" Politburo and Secretariat. Those leaders marked for demotion or retirement are nonetheless usually elected to the Central Committee. In the past, however, important changes in the party hierarchy have usually been revealed at plenums, not at CPSU congresses. The congresses have been used primarily for tidying up loose ends in personnel assignments and, particularly at the 23rd CPSU Congress in 1966, for staging "retirement with honor."

In the case of important party positions, the practice has been for the leadership to decide on changes before they are presented to the Central Committee, unless the top party job is at issue. Both times in the past 15 years when the First Secretary post has been seriously in question, the Central Committee has been convened as a court of final appeal.

Finally, almost every significant change in the post-Stalin leadership has set a precedent of some sort, and past procedures are a most unreliable guide to those of the future.

INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATE: PARTY AND GOVERNMENT

PARTY

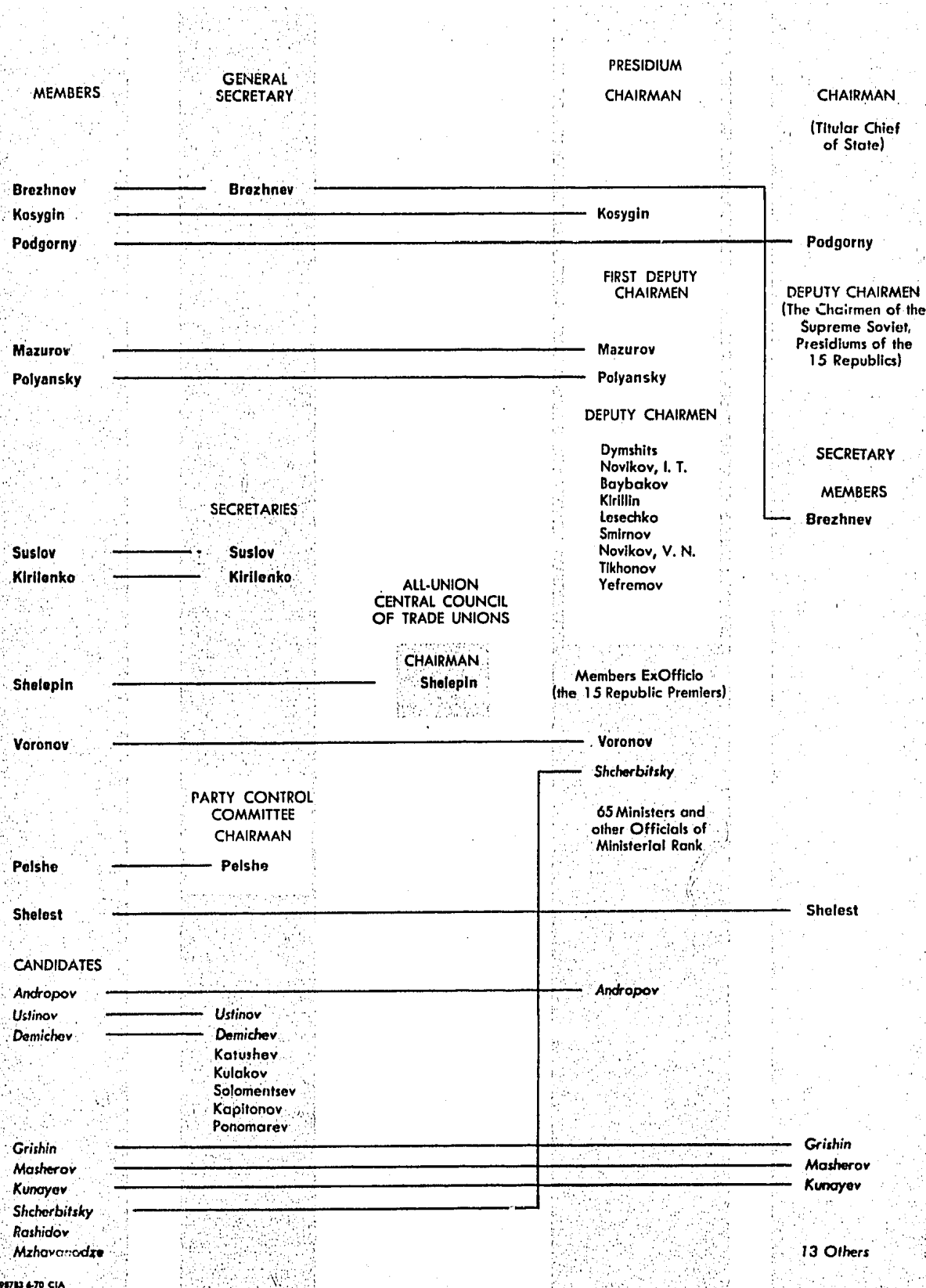
GOVERNMENT

POLITBURO OF
CENTRAL
COMMITTEE

SECRETARIAT OF
CENTRAL COMMITTEE

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

PRESIDIUM OF
SUPREME SOVIET



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The Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers

1. According to the Soviet Constitution, the deputies to the Supreme Soviet (in 1966 there were 1,517) are chosen for a four-year term by all Soviet citizens voting in regularly scheduled elections. In practice, power in the Soviet structure flows from the party, and there are no "candidates" except those who have been marked for office by the party leadership. Despite this hard fact of Soviet politics, the quadrennial elections to the Supreme Soviet are preceded by stylized "election campaigns" conducted by the top leaders who are "candidates" for seats as deputies.

2. In the post-Stalin years, the election results themselves have never foreshadowed changes in leadership posts. Those leaders due to lose seats on the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet or the Council of Ministers are nonetheless elected as deputies to the Supreme Soviet. The elections set for 14 June this year are not expected to produce any surprises.

3. The date for the first session of the new Supreme Soviet is usually announced two weeks after the elections, and the meeting itself takes place from three to six weeks after the announcement. In late June, Moscow should announce the date of the next Supreme Soviet session, which will probably be set for the last half of July or early August. This session will probably be immediately preceded by a plenum of the party Central Committee although it would not be unprecedented if no plenum were held.

4. The Supreme Soviet meets for several days twice a year and elects its own Presidium (executive committee) to conduct business between sessions. In addition, it elects the members of the Council of Ministers and of the Supreme Court, the procurator general, and Soviet ambassadors. In practice, of course, these selections are made by the party. Nevertheless, the formalities are observed. Every newly installed Supreme Soviet during its first session elects its own Presidium and the "new" government,

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and punctiliously approves all actions taken by its Presidium between sessions at subsequent meetings.

5. Only four men have held the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet since Stalin's death: Kliment Voroshilov, 1953-60; Leonid Brezhnev, 1960-64; Anastas Mikoyan, 1964-65; and Nikolay Podgorny, 1965 to the present. Each of the changes was first announced at a Supreme Soviet session, although none coincided with a postelection session. Despite this formality, there was never the slightest doubt that the decision in each case had been made by the party leadership. In the replacements of Voroshilov in 1960 and Mikoyan in 1965, the Supreme Soviet sessions were immediately preceded by Central Committee (CC) plenums. In both cases, the individual's loss of the Presidium chairmanship was announced several months before his corollary loss of Politburo status was made public. The circumstances of Brezhnev's departure from the Supreme Soviet post were somewhat murkier. There was no publicly announced Central Committee plenum; Brezhnev was released at a Supreme Soviet session in July 1964 to "return to full-time work in the Central Committee of the CPSU." (He had been on the Secretariat since June 1963 in an unusual example of double-slotting). Only four months later he replaced the fallen Khrushchev as First Secretary of the party.

6. Three men have held the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers since 1955: Nikolay Bulganin, 1955-58; Nikita Khrushchev (doubling as party First Secretary) 1958-64; and Kosygin, 1964 to present. Only once did a change in this post coincide with elections to the Supreme Soviet: in 1958, when Khrushchev pre-empted the job. Clues foreshadowing that change, however, came from the "electoral campaign," not the election returns. In the stylized kick-off for the "campaign," top leaders receive honorary nominations from other electoral districts in addition to the district from which they will "run." The total of nominations each receives appears to correspond roughly to the weight he carries in the collective. In 1958, First Secretary Khrushchev's total rose to more than twice that of Voroshilov--chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme

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Soviet--who was his nearest competition in number of nominations received. Bulganin, as chairman of the Council of Ministers, should have been approximately equal in ranking to Voroshilov if past practices were followed. Instead, his total dropped sharply. Moreover, the electoral district from which Bulganin "ran" was changed from Moscow to an obscure district in the North Caucasus. The ranking of Frol Kozlov--a possible successor to Bulganin--also declined, although not as sharply as Bulganin's. At the first session of the Supreme Soviet following the 1958 elections, Khrushchev replaced Bulganin as chairman of the Council of Ministers, while retaining his post as first secretary of the party. Kozlov was named first deputy chairman. Presumably his "election campaign" slippage was an advance signal that he was not due to succeed Bulganin. No publicly announced Central Committee plenum had been held for several months preceding this change.

7. In the kick-off of the "election campaign" this year, Brezhnev pulled further ahead of Kosygin and Podgorny, his two nearest "competitors" in number of honorary nominations, to achieve the same pre-eminence that Khrushchev held in 1958 and 1962. (In 1966 Brezhnev's lead was less striking.) Kosygin (in Bulganin's slot) and Podgorny (in Voroshilov's slot) were approximately even. However, the ranking of Kirill Mazurov--one of the two first deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers--dropped sharply. That of Dmitry Polyansky, the other first deputy chairman, remained unchanged. Reports continue to be received of forthcoming changes to be announced "after the elections" among "senior government officials," and the parallels between this year's election campaign rankings and those of 1958 are intriguing but tantalizingly incomplete. Both years had one leader far in front of the other. But unlike 1958, this year there has not been a sharp decline in the ranking of the other top leaders. The first session of the Supreme Soviet after the elections could well bring changes in top state posts, but the exact shape of those changes is still unclear.

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8. Kosygin replaced Khrushchev as Chairman of the Council of Ministers in October 1964, immediately after the Central Committee plenum that ousted the latter from his party posts. No Supreme Soviet session was held, but Kosygin's appointment by the Presidium was duly confirmed at the next Supreme Soviet session in December 1964. He was also re-elected as chairman of the Council of Ministers on 3 August 1966 during the first session of the Supreme Soviet after the elections that year.

9. No such consistency in announcements is evident with respect to the first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. First deputies have been announced in a variety of ways--without benefit of either a CC plenum or a Supreme Soviet session (Dmitry Ustinov in March 1963), after a CC plenum but without a Supreme Soviet session (Kirill Mazurov in March 1965), at a Supreme Soviet session immediately following a CC plenum (Dmitry Polyansky in October 1965), and at a Supreme Soviet session not preceded by a publicly announced CC plenum (Frol Kozlov in March 1958.) All appointments were punctiliously "confirmed" at the next session of the Supreme Soviet.

The Politburo and Secretariat

10. According to CPSU statutes, power in the party flows from the bottom upward. In theory, delegates to party congresses are elected by lower party organs every four years. In practice, the delegates--4,943 in 1966--are selected by the party machine, although the form of "election" by the party membership is observed. The 24th CPSU Congress is expected to be held this fall, probably in October or November. The congress elects the members and candidate members of the Central Committee (195 full and 165 candidate members in 1966), which meets two or more times a year between congresses. The Central Committee, in turn, meets in plenary session immediately after the close of each party congress and elects the Politburo (formerly Presidium, and the Secretariat.

11. In the post-Stalin years, changes in the membership of the Politburo and Secretariat have been formally announced at party meetings--usually at

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Central Committee plenums--so that at least the appearance of "election" has been assured. In practice, however, with two major exceptions, the decisions to promote, demote, or remove members of the Politburo and Secretariat have been presented to an obedient Central Committee by the winners of struggles previously resolved behind the closed doors of the top leadership itself. Support among Central Committee members for individual leaders is unquestionably an important element in these struggles, but the Central Committee as a body has not been drawn in overtly.

12. The two important exceptions involved serious challenges mounted against the First Secretary (now General Secretary) by a majority of the other leaders. In 1957, an embattled Khrushchev--badly outnumbered in the party Presidium--appealed to a hastily convoked Central Committee plenum. The Central Committee backed Khrushchev against his opponents, and five full members of the Presidium were removed from office. In 1964, Khrushchev was again badly outnumbered. He again presented his case to the Central Committee, but this time it withheld support, and he was ousted. (There were rumors this spring of an appeal to the Central Committee, not by a General Secretary who found himself in the minority but by three or more of his critics within the Politburo who presumably could not muster a majority on their side. Those of his critics who were named in the rumors were Mikhail Suslov, Aleksandr Shelepin and Kirill Mazurov. There is no hard evidence to support these rumors, however.)

13. The great bulk of the other changes in the Soviet leadership in the past 15 years--less crucial but nonetheless symptomatic of important shifts in the political center of gravity--have been announced at Central Committee plenums. For the most part, the four party congresses held during this period have been occasions for tidying up loose ends from previous personnel shifts. Although a new group of party Secretaries was announced after the 22nd Congress in 1961, the way had been prepared for them in the preceding year. The 23rd Congress in 1966 was notable for handling two cases of "retirement with

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honor." Anastas Mikoyan, who had been replaced as chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet in December 1965, remained on the party Presidium (now the Politburo) until the following April. After the 23rd Congress, his name was quietly dropped from the list of those re-elected to the newly renamed Politburo, as was that of Nikolay Shvernik, another veteran party leader.

14. "Election campaign" rankings in the build-up for Supreme Soviet elections have not, in the past, provided advance warning of changes of party status except for those that were corollaries to changes in the state apparatus. (Bulganin's slide in March 1958 was a tip-off to his removal from the post of chairman of the Council of Ministers. This removal, in turn, suggested his forthcoming removal from the party Presidium. He survived on the Presidium for another six months, however, during which one CC plenum was held in June, and was not removed from the Presidium until a second one in September 1958.) In 1962, a CC plenum was held immediately following the first post-election session of the Supreme Soviet, and Ivan Spiridonov was removed from the party Secretariat. His ranking in the "election campaign" six weeks earlier, however, had been exactly that to which he was entitled as first secretary of the Leningrad Oblast Party Committee and party secretary.

Outlook

15. Given the increasingly prominent public role Brezhnev has played this spring, he will probably be the main beneficiary if there are top-level changes in the government. Such changes will probably have little early effect on Soviet policy, since Brezhnev's has been the strongest voice in this area in the recent past. If Kosygin, for example, retires at the next Supreme Soviet session, the short-range consequences for Soviet decision-making will be minimal. The caution that is the hallmark of post-Khrushchev Soviet policy is characteristic of Brezhnev himself. In view of his attentiveness to the military, the Soviet position on SALT might harden, but it is unlikely to be reversed. Brezhnev has never been a

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strong advocate of economic reform, and his recent prescription for the sluggishness of the economy has been the traditional one of stricter work discipline and elimination of waste in production.

16. Kosygin's retirement would not, however, signal a resolution of the strains within the collective leadership. In reports of alignments in the Politburo this winter, he figured as a neutral observer rather than as a critic of Brezhnev's leadership.

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[REDACTED] The gap between the "ins" and the "outs" was dramatized this spring during the Lenin Centennial celebration, when Brezhnev all but monopolized the stage. Podgorny, Kosygin and Kirilenko gave speeches that were reported in summarized form. Suslov, Mazurov, Polyansky, and Voronov gave none. Shelepin made one speech and Brezhnev quite emphatically took the spotlight away from that one. In this arena, Kosygin's departure would be a complicating factor in the continuing and still unresolved pre-Congress pulling and tugging. The only evidence yet available on this matter indicates that, in small ways, Shelepin's standing continues its slow decline of the past several years, a decline in which Mazurov joined this spring.

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APPENDIX
Changes in the Top Soviet Leadership, 1955-70

FORUM FOR ANNOUNCE- MENT OF CHANGES	Presidium/Politburo full and candidate	Secretariat (1955 1st Secretary Khrushchev)	Chairman and 1st Deputy Council of Ministers (1955 Bulganin)	Chairman Presidium USSR Supreme Soviet (1955 Voroshilov)
20th CPSU Congress 14-16 Feb 56		Brezhnev in Furtseva in		
CC plenum 20-24 Dec 56		Shepilov out		
Supreme Soviet 5-12 57				
CC plenum 13-14 Feb 57	Kozlov cand in	Shepilov in		
Supreme Soviet 7-10 May 57				
CC plenum 22-29 June 57	Malenkov out Kaganovich out Molotov out Saburov out Pervukhin demoted full to cand Shepilov cand out Ignatov full in Kuusinen full in Aristov full in Belyayev full in Kozlov cand to full Shvernik cand to full Brezhnev cand to full Furtseva cand to full Pospelov cand in Kalinberzin cand in Kirilenko cand in Mazurov cand in Kosygin cand in Korotchenko cand in	Shepilov out Kuusinen in	Kaganovich 1st Dep out Molotov 1st Dep out	
Decision of Presidium of Supreme Court 5 July 57			Saburov 1st Dep out Pervukhin 1st Dep out	
CC plenum 28 Oct 57	Zhukov full out			
CC plenum 16-17 Dec 57	Mukhitdinov full in	Kirichenko in Ignatov in Mukhitdinov in		
Supreme Soviet 27-31 Mar 58 (first meeting fol- lowing elections)			Bulganin out Khrushchev in as Chairman Kozlov 1st Dep in	
CC plenum 17-18 June 58	Podgorny cand in Polyansky cand in			
CC plenum 5 Sept 58	Bulganin full out			
CC plenum 12 Nov 58		Belyayev out		
Supreme Soviet 22-25 Dec 58				
21st CPSU Congress 27 Jan-5 Feb 59				
CC plenum 24 June 59	25X1			

FORUM FOR ANNOUNCE- MENT OF CHANGES	Presidium/Politburo full and candidate	Secretariat (1955 1st Secretary Khrushchev)	Chairman and 1st Deputies Council of Ministers (1955 Bulganin)	Chairman Presidium USSR Supreme Soviet (1955 Voroshilov)
Supreme Soviet 27-31 Oct 59				
CC plenum 22-25 Dec 59				
Supreme Soviet 14-15 Jan 60				
CC plenum 4 May 60	Aristov full out Belyayev full out Kirichenko full out Pospelov cand out Kosygin cand to full Podgorny cand to full Polyansky cand to full Kozlov cand to full	Aristov out Kirichenko out Ignatov out Furtseva out	Ignatov Dep in (Furtseva MinCult)	
Supreme Soviet 5-7 May 60			Kozlov 1st Dep out Kosygin 1st Dep in	Voroshilov out Brezhnev in
CC plenum 13-16 July 60	Voroshilov full out	Brezhnev out		
Supreme Soviet 20-23 Dec 60				
CC plenum 10-18 Jan 61	Voronov cand in Grishin cand in			
22nd CPSU Congress 17-31 Oct 61	Voronov cand to full Furtseva full out Mukhitdinov full out Ignatov full out Kirilenko cand out	Demichev in Ilichev in Ponomarev in Shelepin in Spiridonov in Mukhitdinov out		
CC plenum 5-9 Mar 62				
Supreme Soviet 23-25 Apr 62 (1st following elections)				
CC plenum 26 Apr 62	Kirilenko cand to full	Spiridonov out		
CC plenum 19-23 Nov 62	L.N. Yefremov cand in	Rudakov in Polyakov in Andropov in Titov in		
Supreme Soviet 10-13 Dec 62				
Decision of Presidium of Supreme Soviet 13 March 63			Ustinov 1st Dep in	
CC plenum 18-21 June 63		Brezhnev in Podgorny in		(Brezhnev still Chairman)
CC plenum 9-13 Dec 63	25X1			

FORUM FOR ANNOUNCE- MENT OF CHANGES	Presidium/Politburo full and candidate	Secretariat (1955 1st Secretary Khrushchev)	Chairman and 1st Deputies Council of Ministers (1955 Bulganin)	Chairman Presidium USSR Supreme Soviet (1955 Voroshilov)
Supreme Soviet 16-18 Dec 63				
CC plenum 10-14 Feb 64				
Supreme Soviet 13-15 July 64			Mikoyan 1st Dep out	Brezhnev out Mikoyan in
CC plenum 14 Oct 64	Khrushchev out	Khrushchev out Brezhnev 1st Sec	Khrushchev out Kosygin Chairman	
CC plenum 16 Nov 64	Shelepin cand to full Shelest full in Demichev cand in Kozlov full out	Kozlov out Polyakov out		
Supreme Soviet 9-11 Dec 64				
CC plenum 24-26 Mar 65	Mazurov cand to full Ustinov cand in	Ustinov in Ilichev out	Mazurov 1st Dep in Ustinov 1st Dep out	
CC plenum 27-29 Sept 65		Kulakov in Titov out		
Supreme Soviet 1-2 Oct 65			Polyansky up to 1st Dep	
CC plenum 6 Dec 65	Shcherbitsky cand in	Kapitonov in		
Supreme Soviet 7-9 Dec 65				Mikoyan out Podgorny in
CC plenum 19 Feb 66				
CC plenum 26 Mar 66				
23rd CPSU Congress 29 Mar-4 Apr 66	Mikoyan out Shvernik out Pelshe full in	Podgorny out Kirilenko in		
CC plenum 25-27 May 66				
CC plenum 1 Aug 66				
Supreme Soviet 2-3 Aug 66 (1st following elections)				
CC plenum 12-13 Dec 66		Solomentsev in		
Supreme Soviet 15-19 Dec 66				
CC plenum 20-21 June 67	25X1 Andropov cand in	Andropov out		

FORUM FOR ANNOUNCE-
MENT OF CHANGES

Presidium/Politburo
full and candidate

Secretariat
(1955 1st Secretary
Khrushchev)

Chairman and 1st Deputies
Council of Ministers
(1955 Bulganin)

Chairman Presidium
USSR Supreme Soviet
(1955 Voroshilov)

CC plenum
28 Sept 67

Shelepin out

Supreme Soviet
10-12 Oct 67

CC plenum
9-10 Apr 68

Katushev in

Supreme Soviet
25 June 68

CC plenum
17 July 68

CC plenum
30-31 Oct 68

CC plenum
9 Dec 68

Supreme Soviet
10-13 Dec 68

CC plenum
26 June 69

Supreme Soviet
10-11 July 69

CC plenum
15 Dec 69

Supreme Soviet
16-19 Dec 69

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